

Activate 21st Century Skills with Board Games in the Classroom

21st century skills are essential to student success beyond the English language classroom. One of the best ways to prepare students for life in the real world is to immerse them in authentic situations that provide opportunities to develop language skills while also practicing collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity.

In this webinar, we will learn how playing board games in the classroom:

- provides an opportunity to engage students of all ages in a collaborative or competitive effort
- requires learners to practice the persistence, productivity, flexibility, and leadership skills that will set them up for success in a 21st century workplace



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Jennifer Borch



Jennifer is the Education Program Coordinator at the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants in Colchester, Vermont.

She has spent the past 20 years in language education in both the United States and abroad, working on language and culture projects and facilitating teacher training in North Africa and the Middle East, Nepal, Vietnam, and France.

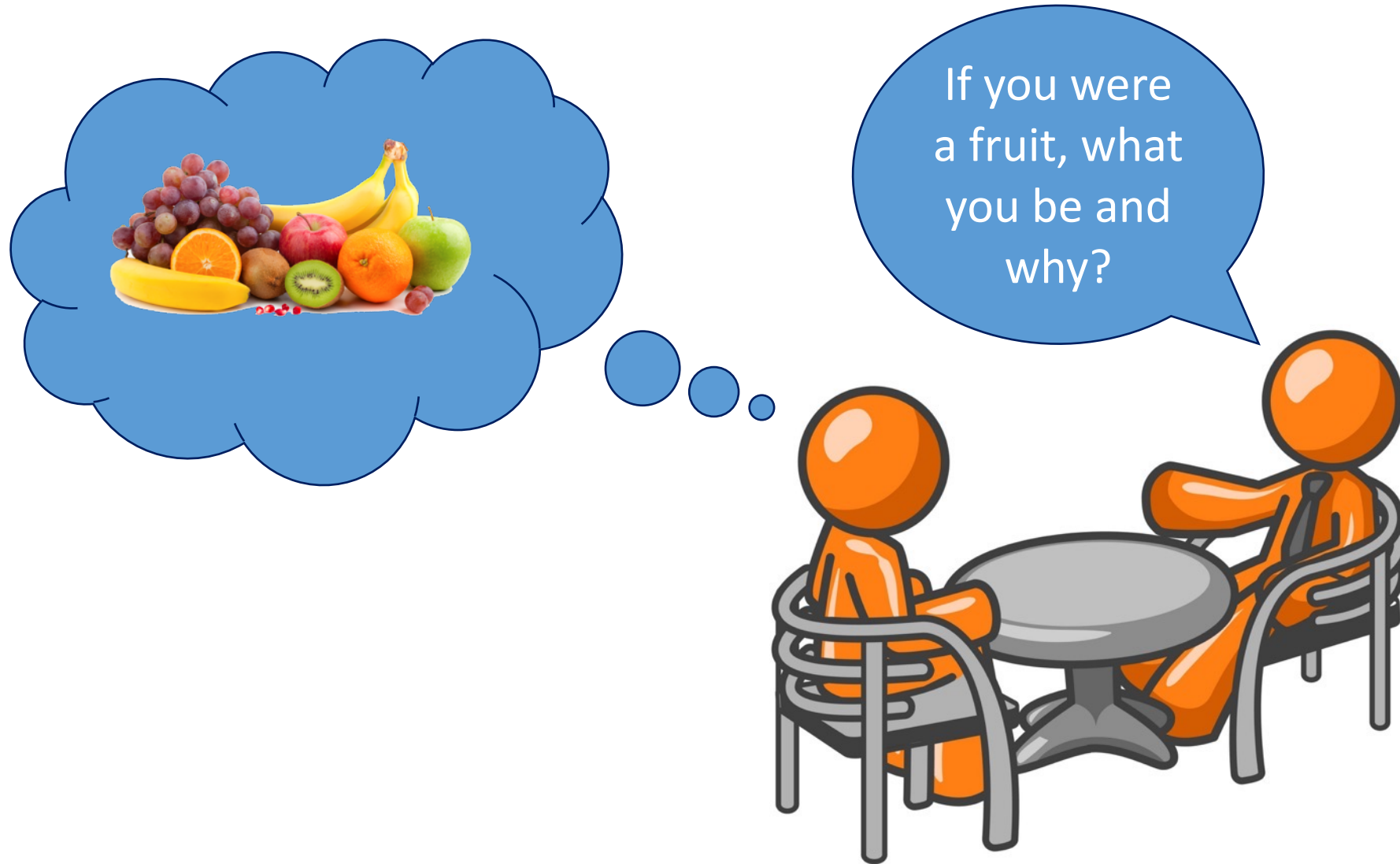
Jennifer has an MA in French and an MA in TESOL. Her interests include digital literacy training, virtual cultural exchange, girls' empowerment, and refugee education.



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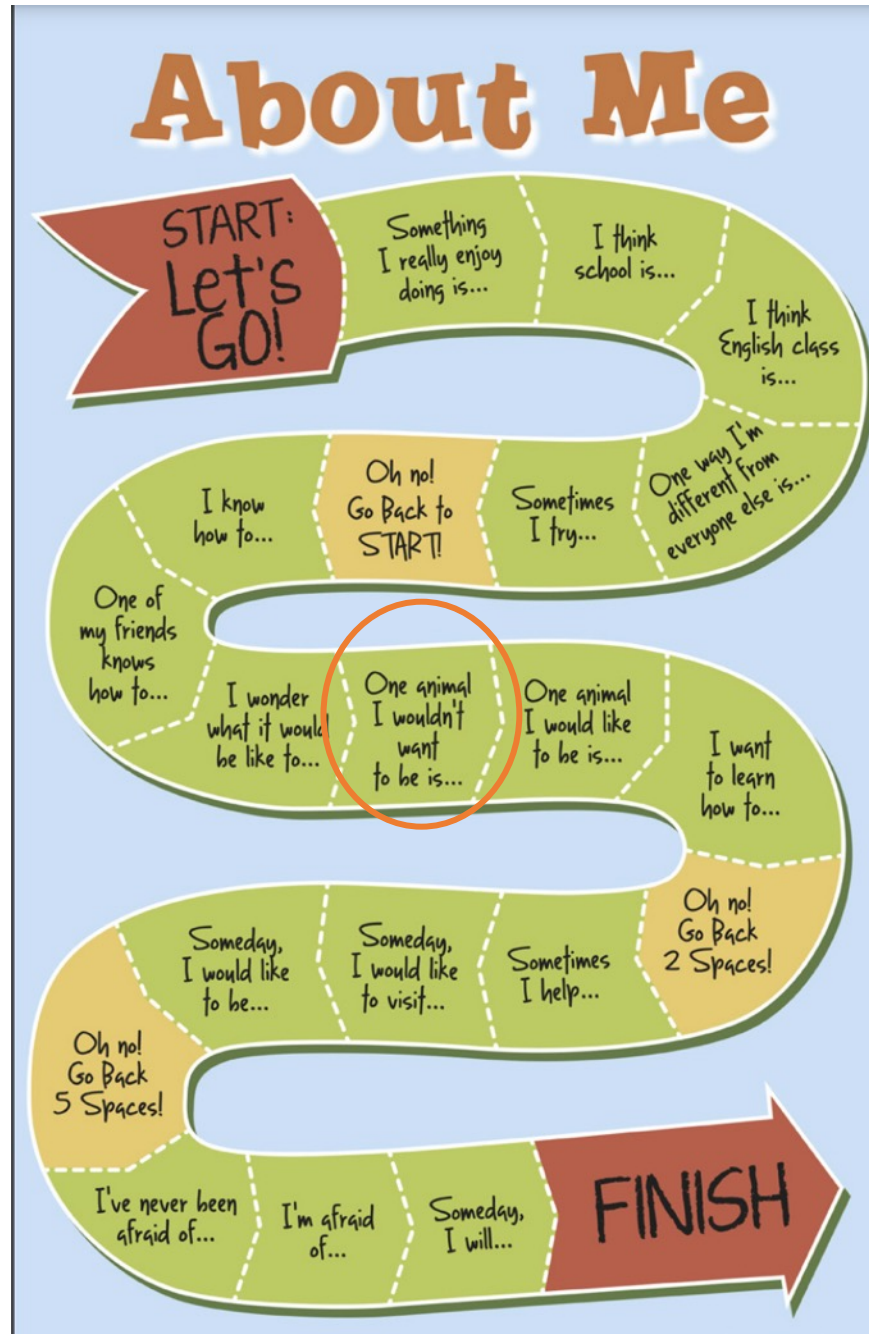
A story to get us started...



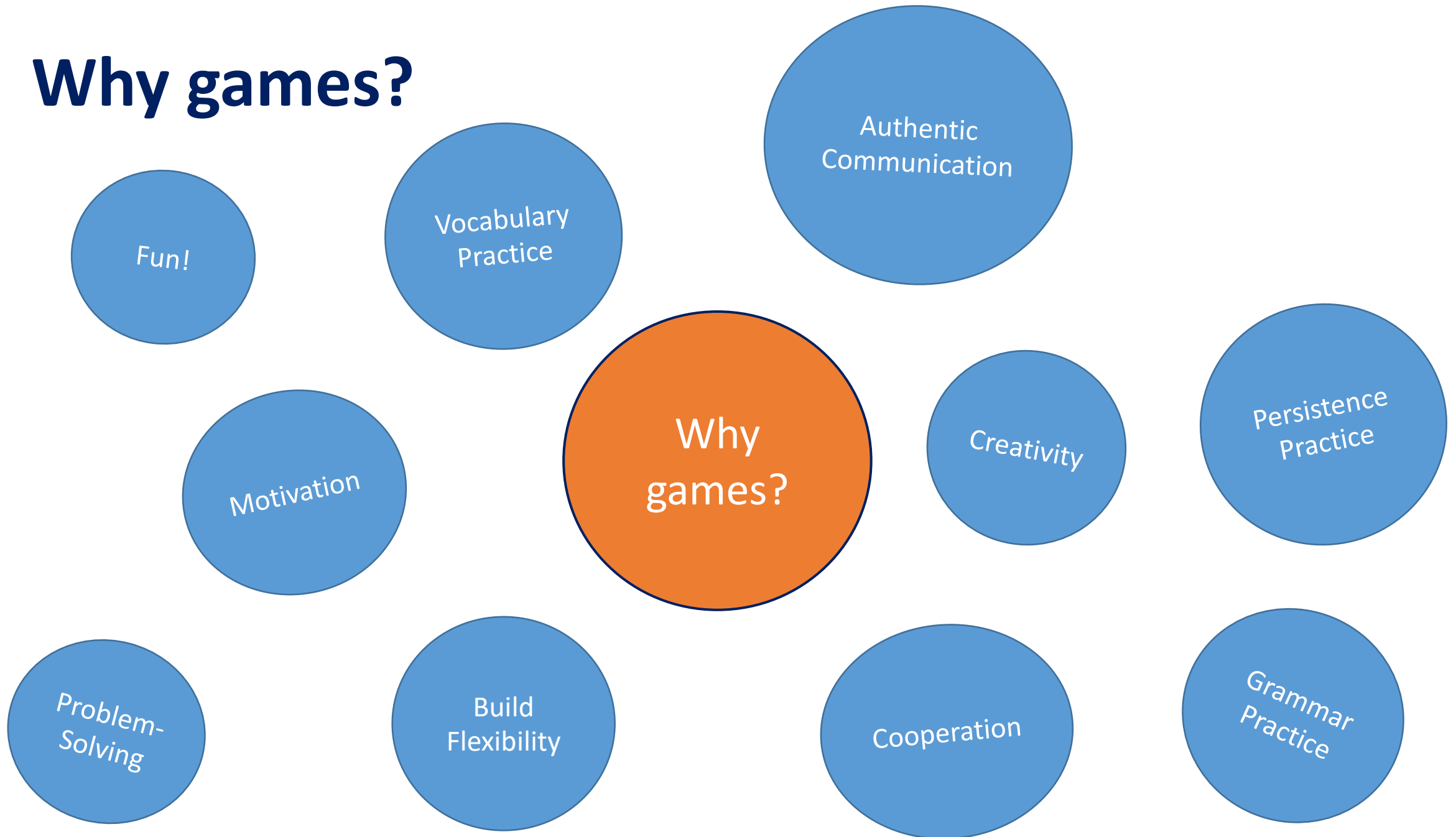
Let's Play

One Animal I would
want to be is

because _____.



Why games?



Workshop Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- Identify language skills and 21st century skills gained through board game play.
- Anticipate challenges of using board games in the classroom and plan for success.
- Articulate the roles of the teacher and students in the gaming classroom.
- Design and facilitate effective game-based lessons that encourage 21st century skill development with clearly-defined, measurable learning objectives.

Session Flow

Together we will:

- Define 21st century skills and identify the educational value of games
- Explore how to set students up to succeed in game play
- Examine how to emphasize 21st century skills when using games for learning
- Evaluate language and 21st century skills objectives and consider game extension options

What are 21st century skills?

The knowledge, life skills, career skills, habits, and traits that are important to student success in today's world – skills that will equip students to succeed in higher education, the workforce, and adult life.

- Communication
- Creativity
- Collaboration
- Critical Thinking



The Educational Value of Games

Language Skills

- Speaking
- Listening
- Reading
- Writing
- Vocabulary Building
- Grammar skill-building



Content skills to make communication comprehensible.

21st Century Skills

- Communication
- Creativity
- Collaboration
- Critical Thinking



Life skills to effectively communicate in authentic situations.



Activate

Games for Learning American English



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Have You Ever...?
Oh, When?

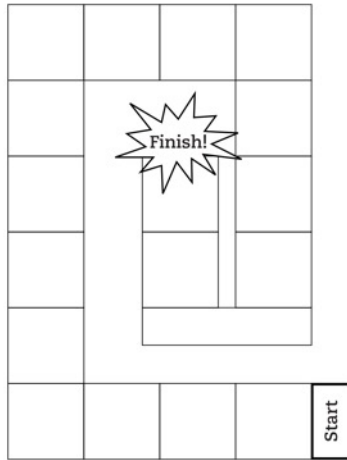
Activate Games for Learning American English

Board Games

Activate Games for Learning American English is a collection of games for the language classroom. The board games offer interactive English language practice in a learner-centered, low-stress environment.

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<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/activate-board-games>

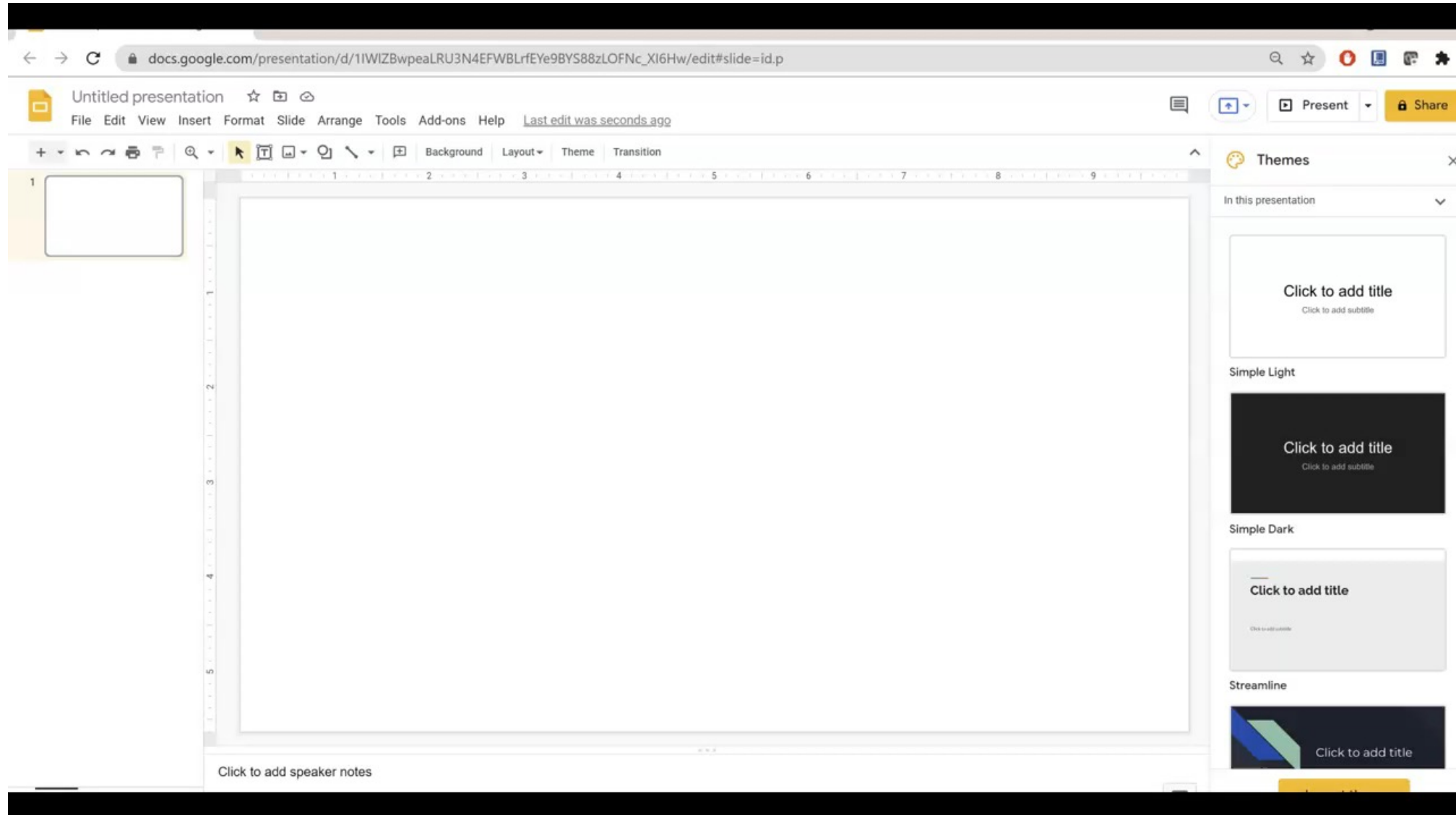


**A Teaching Tool
for All Contexts**

Virtual Board Games



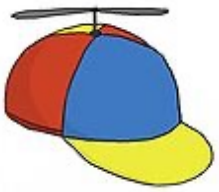
Designing Gameboards on Slides





- Activate background knowledge.
- Model the path.
- Pre-teach “gaming” language.
- Pre-teach thematic language.
- Identify learning objectives.
- Provide clear instructions.
- Create game pieces.
- Consider dice alternatives.
- Take turns.





Activate Background Knowledge

What board games
are you familiar
with?





Model the Path

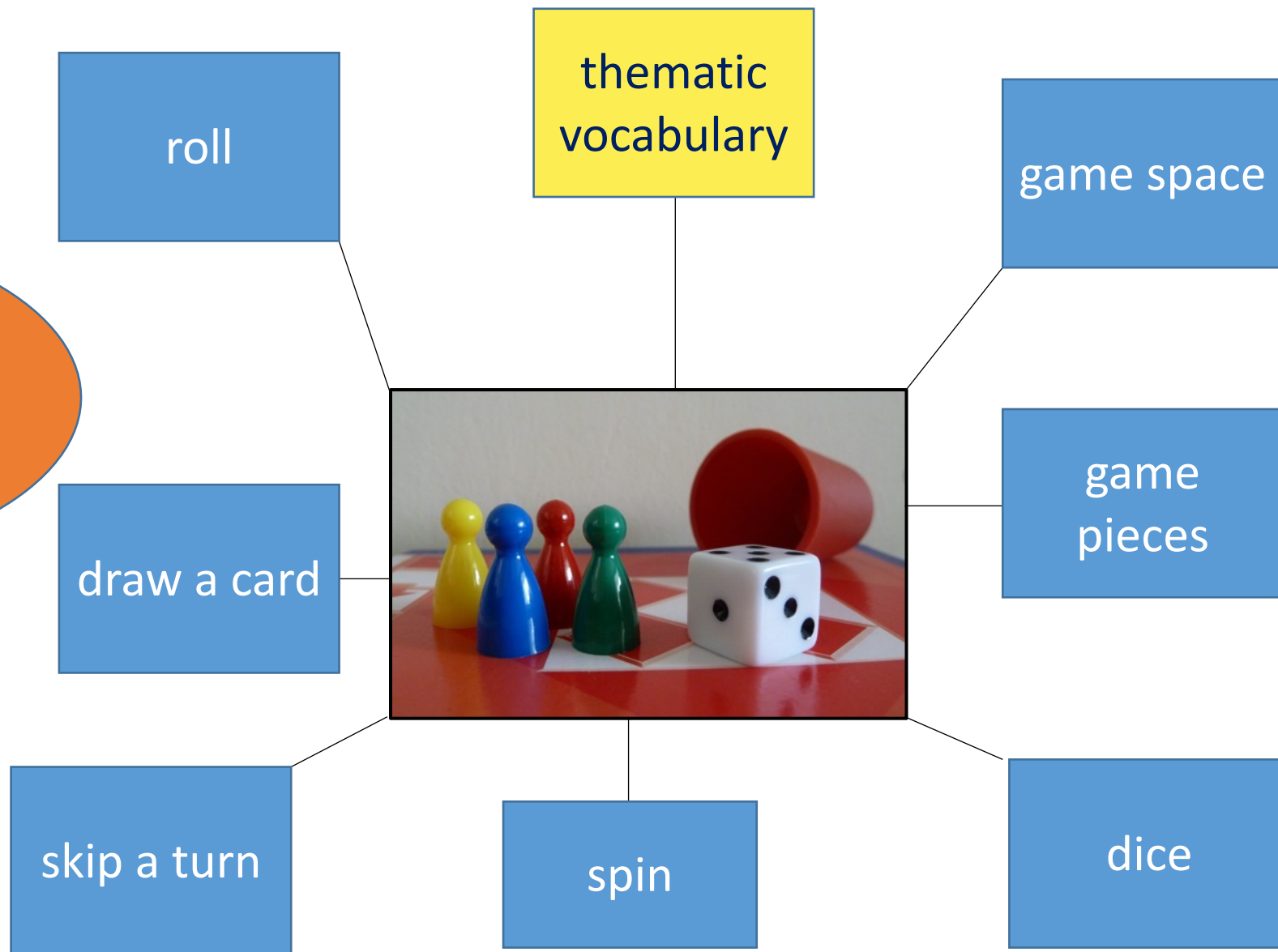
- Point out the game start and finish spaces.
- Model the way in which players will progress along the path
- Highlight any specials spaces (e.g., lose a turn, draw a card, move ahead, etc.)





Pre-teach Vocabulary

What vocabulary
do students need to
be successful in
the game?





Highlight Language Skills

What language skills could we build with this game?

- Thematic vocabulary
- Expressing likes and dislikes
- Expressing preference
- Expressing reason with *because* clauses
- Comparing and contrasting
- Reading, writing, speaking, listening





Develop measurable language learning objectives for your audience and context.

Students will be able to:

- Accurately use “game” vocabulary to engage in play.
- Demonstrate mastery of year 1 vocabulary while expressing likes and dislikes.
- Explain reasoning with simple *because* clauses.



Teacher Tip

Provide students with structure to support their success and deliver measurable results.





Empower students with structure

Provide clear instructions for
language goals.

For each space on the gameboard:

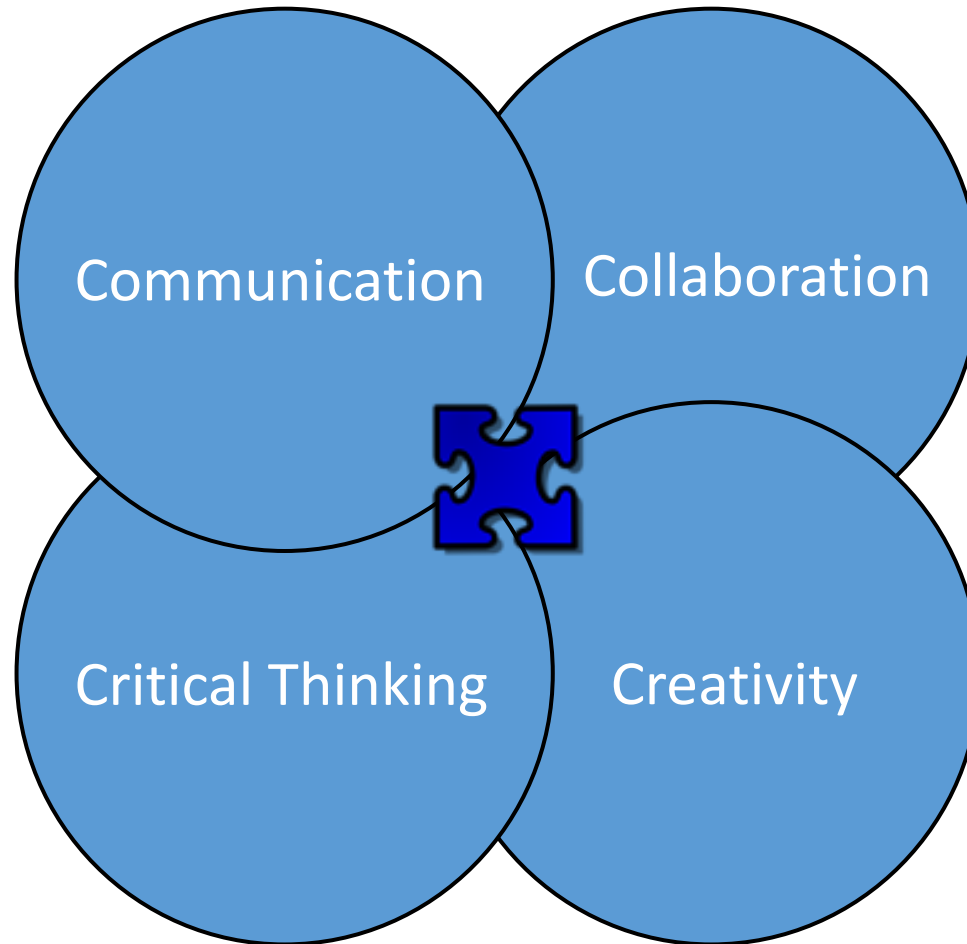
1. Read the category out loud
2. Say your favorite item in the category
3. Explain why it is your favorite.

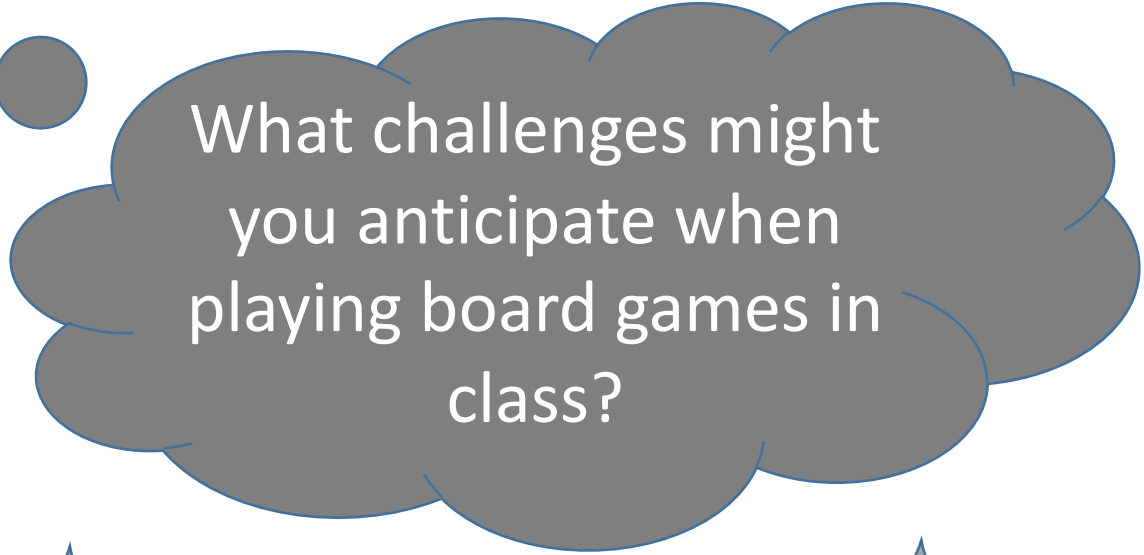
Scaffold

My favorite season is summer
because I love the sunshine and
the beach.

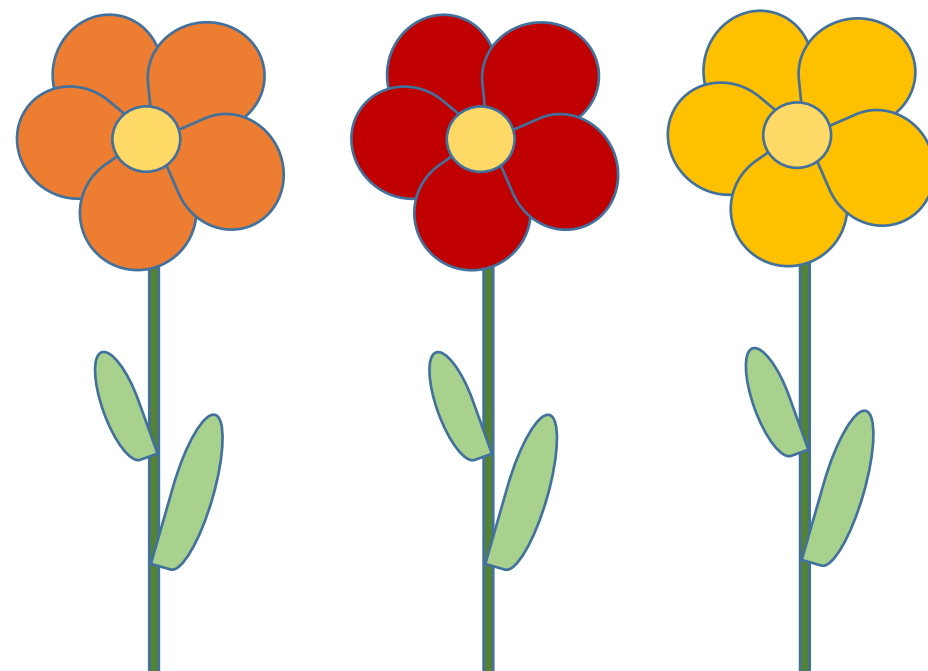
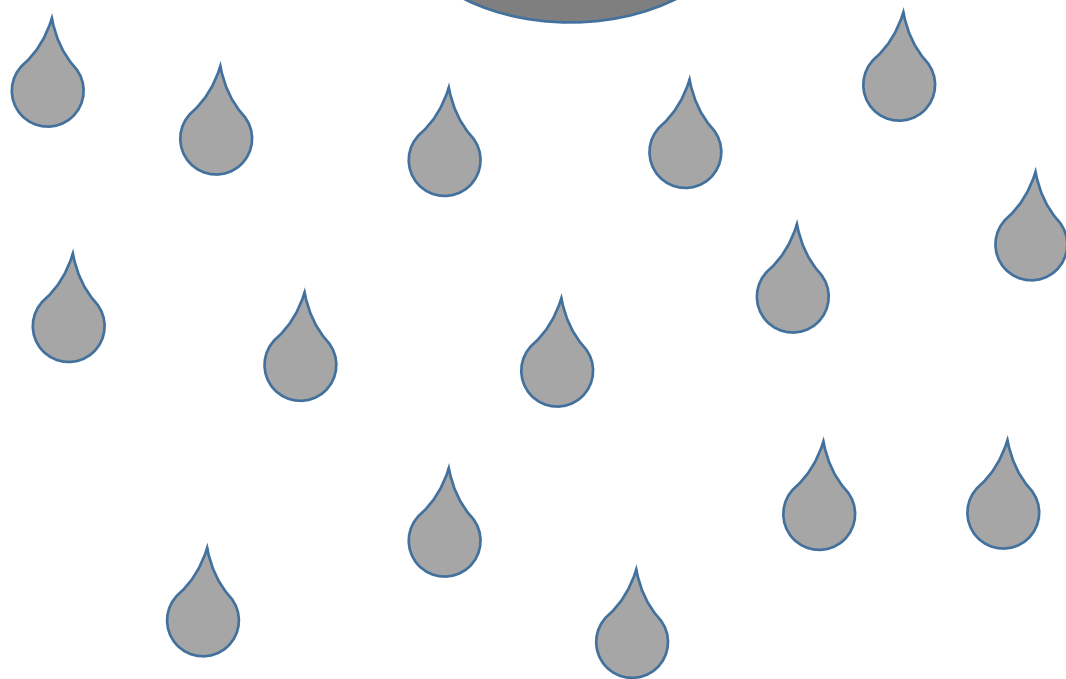


Focus on 21st Century Skills





What challenges might
you anticipate when
playing board games in
class?



Teacher Tip:

Deliberately plan for the rain. Provide enough structure to make the task clear, then, step away.



Prepare to Cultivate 21st Century Skills

Reframe “challenges” as opportunities to build 21st century skills through game play.



Think of challenges as authentic situations that students will encounter outside the classroom.



Empower students to:

- Communicate
- Create
- Collaborate
- Think Critically



Intentionally create situations which will require students to work together to solve problems.



Consciously allow space for students to take charge. Step back and let students lead.





Pre-Game Plan

1. Present the game board.
2. Show students how to progress from start to finish.
3. Make language objectives explicit.
4. Review task expectations.
5. Highlight available supports.
6. Give students three “getting started” tasks.

Name Your. .

In your group of four...

1. Identify game pieces.

2. Determine what you will use to decide how many spaces you will move on each turn.

3. Decide who will go first.



Let's Get Ready to Play

In your group of four...

1. Identify game pieces.

2. Determine what you will use to decide how many spaces you will move on each turn.

3. Decide who will go first.



Oldest, youngest, alphabetical order, birth month, clockwise, flip a coin, rock-paper-scissors



Reflect

What 21st century skills did we just use?

- Communication
- Creativity
- Collaboration



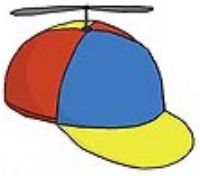
Teacher Tip

Plan thoughtfully. Release control to students. Empower them to collaborate to develop their own structure and to problem solve.

Develop 21st Century Skill Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Demonstrate creativity through development of game accessories.
- Negotiate turn-taking behavior.
- Collaborate with others to solve problems.



Let's Play

1. Take turns.
2. Follow the rules.
3. Let me know when your group has finished.



Notice Learning Opportunities

- Flexibility
- Negotiation skills
- Dispute resolution
- Cooperation/Competition
- Gaming vocabulary

Name Your Favorite



Evaluating Goals and Planning Extensions





Evaluate Language Learning Objectives

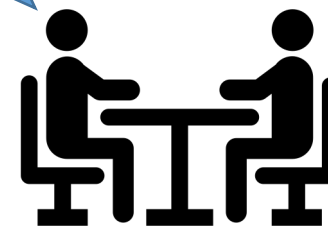
Language Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Demonstrate mastery of year 1 vocabulary while expressing likes and dislikes.
- Explain reasoning with simple *because* clauses.
- Effectively use “game” vocabulary to engage in play.
- Employ language of negotiation to resolve disagreements.

Do you mind...
I propose...
How would you feel...
I suggest...
That seems fair...

I agree...
I'm concerned about...
I see your point...
Could you clarify...
From my perspective...





Evaluate 21 Century Learning Objectives

21st Century Skills Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Demonstrate creativity through development of game accessories.
- Negotiate turn-taking behavior.
- Collaborate with others to solve problems.
- Employ critical thinking skills...

Create opportunities for students to collect and examine information, draw conclusions, make predictions, and explain reasoning with evidence.





Extend to Make it Measurable

- **Critical Thinking:** Students record another player's answers throughout the game, then write a paragraph predicting where they will live and what they will do for work in the future based on their answers.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students play the game again using the "least favorite" prompt instead. Have students predict their partner's "least favorites" based on what they learned about their partner's preferences and logical reasons for their answers.
- **Creativity:** Students create their own questions or prompts.
- **Creativity and Collaboration:** Students work with a partner to design their own games.

What other extension activities
would help build 21st century skills?



Wrapping Up

Teachers will be able to:

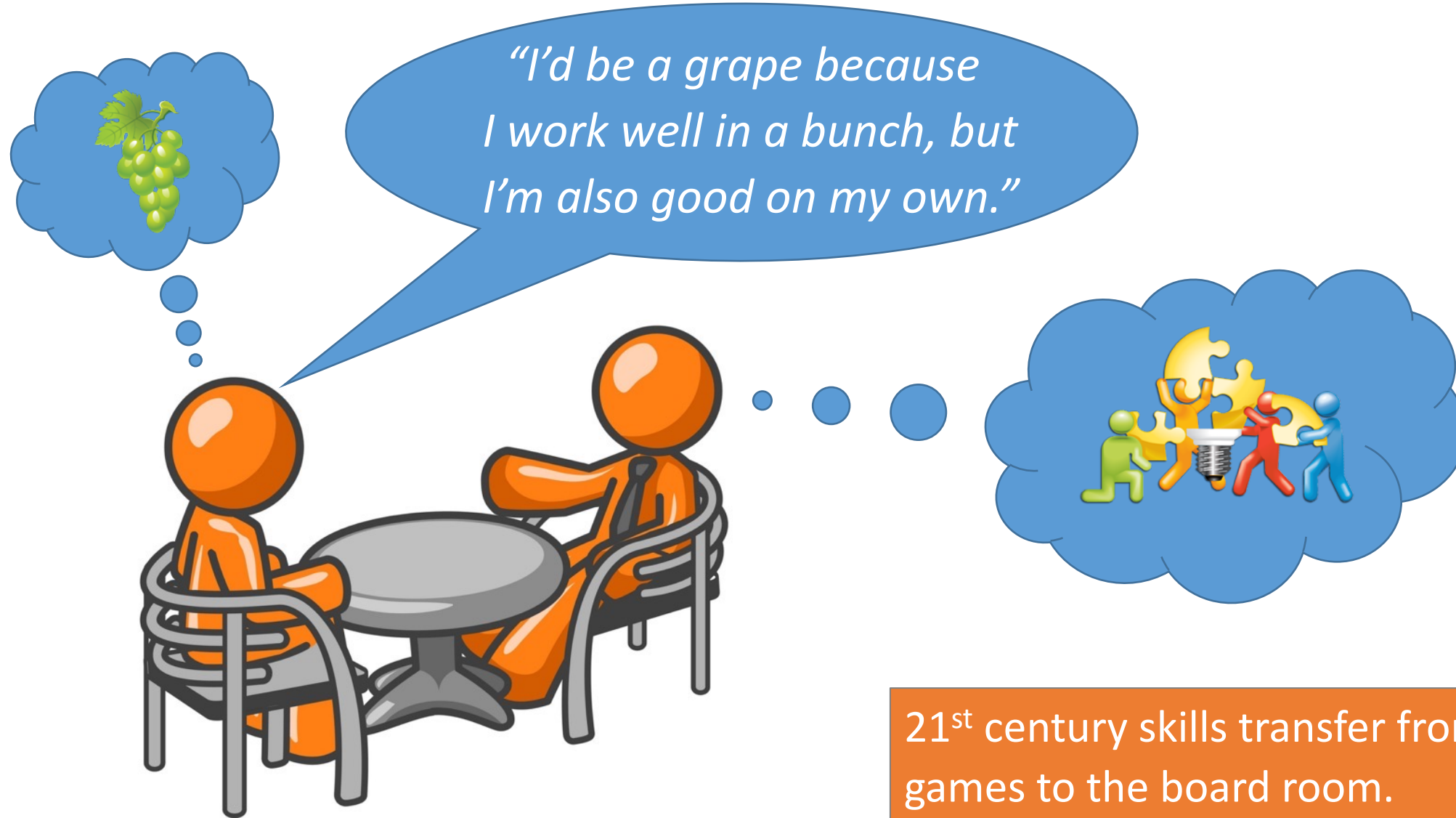
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- Anticipate challenges of using board games in the classroom and plan for success.
- Articulate the roles of the teacher and students in the gaming classroom.
- Design and facilitate effective game-based lessons that encourage 21st century skill development with clearly-defined, measurable learning objectives.

Students will be empowered to:



Thrive in the 21st century.

The end of the story...



21st century skills transfer from board games to the board room.

References

- Buckle, J., 2021. *A Comprehensive Guide to 21st Century Skills*. [online] Panoramaed.com. Available at: <https://www.panoramaed.com/blog/comprehensive-guide-21st-century-skills>
- Education Week. 2021. *How Do You Define 21st-Century Learning?*. [online] Available at: <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/how-do-you-define-21st-century-learning/2010/10>

Useful Links

- [Activate Games for Learning American English: Board Games](#)
- [Flippity.net virtual AE game](#)
- [Tutorial: Build your own online board game with Flippity.net](#)

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Reflection Questions

1. Have you ever used games to promote 21st-century skills in your English language classes? Which games have you used, and which skills do they develop? If not, how might you adjust your current game-play approaches to develop these skills?
2. Could you make establishing 21st-century skills objectives part of your lesson planning routine? How?
3. Which of the approaches in today's webinar will you try in your classroom? Will you need to make any modifications or adaptations? Which game-play extension activities would work well with your students?



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